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**NEW MEDICARE BENEFIT MAKES DIABETES CONTROL
MORE AFFORDABLE**

Washington, D.C....April 1999 -- All Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes are now eligible for coverage of the glucose monitors, test strips and lancets they need to monitor their blood sugar levels. The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP), a joint program of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, along with the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), today announced the launch of a cooperative campaign to promote this important benefit.

Medicare beneficiaries with insulin treated or non-insulin treated diabetes will be covered under the new benefit after meeting the annual deductible for Medicare (Part B). Beneficiaries are responsible for only 20 percent of the cost of their diabetes monitoring equipment and supplies. Medicare covers the remaining 80 percent. Over 16 million Americans are living with diabetes, a chronic and life-threatening disease.

People with diabetes can help control their disease by regularly measuring their blood sugar levels. Keeping blood sugar as close to normal as possible is crucial to delaying or preventing the complications of diabetes, such as blindness, end-stage kidney disease and lower-limb amputation.

As people age, their risk for diabetes increases, and patients on fixed incomes often find it hard to purchase blood sugar monitoring equipment and supplies. Previously, Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes who did not use insulin to control their diabetes (type 1 or type 2) had to cover all of their monitoring supplies or do without. This expanded benefit was enacted as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

“A payment system that helps people get their monitoring equipment and supplies gives them the tools necessary to control diabetes and prevent disability and premature death,” says Charles M. Clark, Jr., MD, chairman of the NDEP.

The NDEP is sponsored by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NDEP aims to educate Americans with diabetes and improve their treatment and health outcomes. NDEP and HCFA are launching this national campaign to inform Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes about this expanded benefit. Messages will appear on television, radio and in publications. NDEP's Partnership Network of more than 200 public and private sector organizations will also distribute messages to their members.

For more information about the NDEP and about Medicare's expanded coverage of diabetes equipment and supplies, call the National Diabetes Education Program at 1-800-438-5383 or visit <http://ndep.nih.gov> or <http://www.medicare.gov>.

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